

EU and Opposition Leaders Press Ukraine's Yanukovich on Tymoshenko

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KIEV — The European Union on Friday warned Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich that he would have to free former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko to be sure of sealing agreements on association and free trade next month.

Tymoshenko, who ran Yanukovich close in a presidential election in February 2010, is now serving a seven-year sentence for abuse of power handed out to her in 2011: after a trial which the EU says smacked of "selective" justice.

At a round table with Ukrainian parliamentarians, European commissioner Stefan Fuele said the ex-Soviet republic would have to demonstrate "distinct movement" in solving the Tymoshenko issue and show progress on other reforms to be sure of EU support for signing the deals.

The Yanukovich government has committed itself to signing the agreements with the EU,

in the face of hostility from big neighbor Russia, at a summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, from Nov. 28 to 29.

But Yanukovych has still not given any firm answer to requests from Western leaders and EU envoys for him to pardon Tymoshenko, a former prime minister and big rival, and allow her to go to Germany for medical treatment.

Fuele said Ukraine still had to show tangible progress in reforming electoral law and judicial bodies, such as the state prosecutor's office.

"The third point is the need for distinct movement in relation to the case of Yulia Tymoshenko," he said, according to a Ukrainian translation of his remarks.

Ukraine has come under pressure from Moscow over its European integration plans, which will mark a pivotal shift westwards away from close links with Russia on which it is heavily dependent for gas supplies.

President Vladimir Putin has threatened to take "protectionist" measures for the Russian economy if Ukraine joins an EU free trade zone, raising fears in Kiev of widespread disruption to traditional trade with one of its main export markets.

But Fuele warned Kiev that EU sympathy over Russian pressure would not influence the bloc's decision when its foreign ministers reviewed Ukraine's democratic progress later this month.

"It would be a big mistake to think that, in light of the recent pressure on Ukraine to step away from the Association Agreement, political emotions and thoughts would prevail in EU decisions," he said.

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, at a meeting Thursday with Yanukovych, repeated Berlin's offer to take Tymoshenko for medical treatment for a back ailment as a way of solving the issue.

But Yanukovych appeared to have given no firm answer to the request for a pardon.

Speaking at the same round table, former Ukrainian economy minister Arseny Yatseniuk, an opposition ally of Tymoshenko, said existing laws provided for a pardon by Yanukovych.

"I hope that together we can find a solution. The problem of Yulia Tymoshenko can be solved — it depends on the political will of the president of Ukraine," he said.

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